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Felon is sentenced to 15 years in prison for a weapons offense linked to an assault in Woonsocket

A federal judge has sentenced **Matthew Jones**, 30, to 15 years imprisonment – the statutory maximum – for possessing crack cocaine and a handgun during an incident in November 2003 in which he assaulted a woman in Woonsocket.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the sentence, which U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith imposed yesterday in U.S. District Court, Providence. Judge Smith said the sentence was justified by Jones' violent criminal record. Jones, whose address is unknown, has prior convictions in Massachusetts for rape.

In December, Jones pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and possessing crack cocaine. At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard W. Rose said the government could prove that, on November 19, 2003, Jones wielded a gun and assaulted a Woonsocket woman during a dispute at her front door. The woman fought back, kicked Jones, and called 911.

Jones fled from a police officer responding to the 911 call. As Jones fled, the officer saw what appeared to be a gun in his hand and then heard the sound of rounds being ejected from a pistol.

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After backup officers arrived, they found Jones lying nearby on the ground, his hands locked behind his head. Officers found a .40 caliber pistol, a magazine cartridge, and four rounds of ammunition hidden in various places near Jones. They also seized 5.6 grams of crack cocaine from one of his pockets.

The victim told police that Jones had come to her home wanting to buy back a car that he had sold her. She said that, when she refused, he punched her. When she saw him pull out a gun, she kicked him. He dropped the gun and, when he bent to pick it up, she kicked him again, locked her front door, and dialed 911.

Woonsocket Police and the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** investigated the case. A joint review of the case by the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office resulted in the federal charges.

The joint review was part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes. Under Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Attorney's Office, working with ATF, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, and other agencies, aggressively prosecutes federal firearms offenses in an effort to incarcerate those responsible for gun violence and deter others from committing gun crimes. Since 2001, federal firearms prosecutions in Rhode Island have more than doubled and gun offenders have been sentenced to a total of more than 550 years in federal prison.